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ABSTRACT

The paper discusses the aspiration problems that rural students confront each day. By exploring their background and family life styles, it is hoped that some sort of understanding of their aspiration problems could aid the school counselors. The paper is divided into 4 main discussions: (1) characteristics of rural life, (2) problems of rural students, (3) counseling rural students, and (4) special problems of counseling in rural schools. The paper points out that rural youths do have special needs and problems--e.g., graduates from small schools experience less success in college than do graduates from larger schools. A review of the literature in this area reveals 3 special interest areas: (1) special tools and skills that will help these students, (2) numerous helpful agencies, and (3) the ability to approach each individual as one human being to another. A list of 24 special problems are also presented, such as (1) parents do not realize the importance of post high school education or training; (2) rural areas are less likely to have manpower programs of vocational training available; and (3) there is less opportunity to participate in job-placement programs. Not all is grim in rural school counseling, though. There is greater flexibility and closeness to students and the community environment. (FF)

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COUNSELING THE RURAL DISADVANTAGED STUDENT

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INTRODUCTION

With so much of the emphasis in educational issues today being placed on education of minority and underprivileged children, it is no wonder that another aspect of our population, the rural youth, is so easily overlooked, and seldom considered when issues pertaining to education of the culturally deprived are discussed or studied. As a result, the majority of the population, which is urban, has little or no understanding of the unique problems with which most rural youth are faced.

It is ironic that this portion of the population is overlooked, because it does comprise a large percentage of the total population. In 1956, the rural population accounted for 36.9 percent of the total population, 13.1 percent being classified as rural-farm, and 23.8 percent as rural non-farm (Noble and Dawson, 1961, p. 11). This is interesting when one compares 36.9 percent rural with the 85 percent rural population in 1850. It is also interesting to note that despite the fact that rural-farm people are dwindling in numbers, the rural non-farm population is increasing (Noble and Dawson, 1961, p. 12).

From the educational viewpoint, the nation's schools in 1959 were serving 14.3 million rural elementary children and 4.04 million rural high-school students, making a total of 18.34 million rural students (Noble and Dawson, 1961, p. 22). One may conclude from the above facts that rural education is the concern of a large number of people in the United States, although there are many more people who are unaware and unconcerned over rural educational issues.

Just what exactly is implied by the term "rural"? According to the census determination, as reported by Charles (1968)and Beegle and Allen (Lee, 1963), rurality applies to the population living in centers of 2500 or less. Edgar further specifies that most rural people make their living from the land, the railroad, tourism, or government jobs, and the schools have small enrollments of 75 or less students per grade. In addition, "rural youth" would fall in the category of 15 to 23 year olds, unless otherwise specified.

When most people think of rural youth, the fact that many of these students are disadvantaged may at first seem rather ludicrous. After all, these are the children that grow up in the great outdoors, so they have plenty of home-grown food, acres of land for riding horses, hunting, keeping pets, and other recreational pasttimes. They belong to closely-knit families who all work together on the farm. They have clean air and clean water, and their conception of pollution is beer cans in ditches. Although most of these ideas about rural youth can apply to many of them, "rurality by its very nature causes students to be disadvantaged" (Edington, 1970, p. 76), because being "advantaged" involves more than access to the old-fashioned idea of the "good life".

CHARACTERISTICS OF RURAL LIFE

Before being able to explore the problems that rural youth must confront each day, it is necessary to explore their background, and the rural life stype in general. What characteristics are unique to the rural population? A concise comparison of rural-urban traits is to be found in Appendix A, and I would also elaborate on some of the major differences, because sometimes we tend to over-emphasize the values of rural life to offset unfavorable comparisons with urban life. First, rural economic status will be discussed.

In 1963 it was reported that "rural income per capita doesn't match urban income per capita, and as a result, rural residents are disadvantaged in terms of the larger society" (Taylor and Jones, 1963). Udall reported in 1967 that one-third of the rural population account for one-half of the population living in poverty.

The Department of Agriculture issued the following statistics in 1964 (Bird, 1964, p. 43):

1. In 1959, 17.4 million rural people were living in poverty.
2. Of the 16 million families at the poverty level, 10 million were non-farm and 6 million were farm families.
3. Over 12 million of these people were white; 4 million were black; and ½ million were Indian.
4. Some rural families are chronically poor.
5. Unemployment and underemployment in 1959, ages 20-64 affected over 3 million rural people, a total of 18 percent of the rural labor force.
6. The educational level of the family head is almost always low.
7. More poverty is found in families headed by persons over 65.

Freeman's report (1968, p. 106) on rural poverty is not much more optimistic, as he lists the following:

1. One-fourth of the nation's population--54 million people--account for one-half of the nation's poverty.
2. Underemployment in rural areas affected 15 percent of the 20-64 year olds. (National average is 3.5 percent).
3. The new rural jobs which are added account for only two-thirds of what are needed.
4. One-half of the poor homes are in rural areas, and on million of these are unfit for human habitation.

Some people may suspect these statistics to be misleading, due to that farm income, such as produce, which is non-financial. It is necessary, under these circumstances, to consider two things. First, food products account for a rather small portion of one's total budget, and can not be used to allay expenses for other necessities. Secondly, because of the forced specialization of the majority of farms today, the farmer now places all his efforts and equipment in one area, so, other than the wife's vegetable garden, fewer and fewer of today's farms have a wide variety of animal food-sources. For instance, if a farmer is to specialize in beef production, he will no longer be able to provide for chickens, milk cows, sheep, hogs, and so forth.

Another factor which is common to the rural population is the larger family. This is a factor which is also probably either directly or indirectly related to their economic status. In the United States in 1957, the average family size was 3.61 persons, and when broken down, the urban families had an average of 3.48 persons, the rural non-farm families, 3.75 persons, and the rural-farm families, and average of 4.01 people (Noble and Dawson, 1961, p.139). Also, in 1950, the fertility rates of rural-farm women were given as being 166 percent greater than those of urban women. From the same study it was also shown that women in the lower levels of years of schooling had had far higher numbers of children proportionately than women in the higher levels of schooling (Noble and Dawson, 1961, p. 98).

Since the correlation between mother's educational level and number of children is not unique to the rural environment, but exists in the urban situation as well, this point probably needs no clarification or substantiation. The relatively large size of rural families is also fairly common, although the reasons for this phenomenon are not very clear. It may be partially explained by the lower educational level of rural people, but many factors, and not just one, account for family size. Some rural people confess to the fact that many boys in a family means many working hands on the farm, thereby reducing labor costs.

Because of large family size, it is not uncommon in rural schools to find the same last names in almost every grade. In the rural Iowa school where I taught, out of the total of several hundred students in my classes, only one that I know of was an only child. Compare this to the family with over twenty children, which was admittedly, even in that area, somewhat of a phenomenon!

A third important factor is educational level. Rural people tend to be considerably less educated than urban people. From the 1960 census figures, it was reported that the average years of schooling were 11.1 years for the urban individual, 9.5 years for rural non-farm, and 8.8 years for rural-farm (Nam and Powers, 1963, p. 114). The educational achievement level of rural people is about two years less per person. In 1968 Freeman reported that in 1960, 700,000 adults in rural America had never enrolled in school, three million others had had less than five years of school and classified as functional illiterates, and nineteen million had not completed high school (Freeman, 1968, p. 103). These are astounding figures and are perhaps even inconceivable to anyone who hasnever resided in a rural area, but I do not feel that they are at all misleading. The old idea that education is not an important asset for a farmer is still firmly implanted in the minds of most isolated farmers, and ignorance tends to beget ignorance. This situation also has serious implications for the children's educational achievement, as "the educational heritage which adults pass down to the younger population is an important determinant of what the youths themselves will achieve scholastically" (Nam and Powers, 1963, p. 114). When parents are unable to help their own children with their studies, and furthermore, do not even encourage them, or stress the importance of education, then motivational levels are certain to be low.

A fourth consideration will deal with rural attitudes and beliefs, which could be a result of educational status, but are also intertwined

with other factors. In a poll taken by Glenn and Alston (1967, p. 400), farmers' responses showed that they are ascetic, work-oriented, puritanical, prejudiced, ethnocentric, isolationist, uninformed, unlikely to read books and newspapers, distrustful of people, intolerant of deviance, opposed to civil liberties, opposed to birth control, and favorable to early marriage and high fertility, and more traditional in religious beliefs. Most rural people are Protestant, and one-half of them are church people, with a rigid, static orientation to life (Lee, 1963, p. 39). Many of these narrow-minded characteristics are probably due to the lack of input of information into the rural homes. The rural cultural level is very impoverished. The reading material which does exist is scarce and on the popular level, such as perhaps a daily newspaper, the county weekly, catalogs, and farm papers. (Lee, 1963,p. 40) Any culture which does exist is probably introduced into the home through the television, which is very popular with rural people. (It is ironic that the areas such as these which need educational television the most, will be the last to receive it due to their sparse population.)

Since most attitudes develop in the home, many rural students come to school with preconceived ideas similar to those of their parents, and like their parents, they are not too willing to change their minds. This does not have serious consequences, but it does hinder the educational process, which requires open-mindedness and an ability to look at all aspects of a situation before judging. Not only are these students at a loss as to how to look at life, but they also will have problems finding where to look. A fellow teacher of mine was temporarily halted in her plans for the current events unit, when she discovered that only one or two of her students had daily newspapers at home.

A fifth point is that rural people are isolated spatially, which is part of the cause of poorer educational facilities and communications, poorer utilities and medical care (Lee, 1963, p. 37). The advantages of isolation are probably all too obvious to the urban dweller. Rural people, in addition to the obvious advantages, also have fewer legal rules and restrictions with which to cope. Their way of life is of little consequence to anyone else, and so they are under only their own jurisdiction. Another result of being isolated is that students spend less time with peers, and so become more famialistic. This could be good or bad, depending on the family situation. It can also hinder socialization processes.

Jenkins (1963) mentioned the fact that the rural student knows a larger number of those with whom he associates daily. There is no anonomousness. He has extremely limited social contacts and therefore limited learning opportunities. The rural youth is, as a result, poorly socialized and unsophisticated. In some ways, being in a sparsely populated area can probably have as serious ramifications as living in a crowded tenement building.

The rural situation can also be characterized by a sixth trait, decreasing population, which has certain effects on the rural way of life. Most rural communities have few migrants coming in, so there is a high degree of interrelation. There are the areas where it is unsafe

to talk to anyone about someone else, because they are probably related. It can also result in some of the attitudes which were mentioned earlier, including a standardization of taste, and outlook on life. Copp (Lee, 1963) feels the declining population size can also result in a type of pessimism, a[illegible]ackward-looking" in rural people.

A last rurally-related problem is that of health and welfare. The following statements are from a Department of Agriculture document (Johnson, 1967, p. 54):

> Often penniless, the rural poor are removed from the services that even the poor in towns and cities can usually take for granted....There is some improvement in services offered in rural areas, but facilities are still far too limited for rural youth and their parents, and the professional assistance needed by rural residents is often hard to find.

Freeman (1968, p. 106) stated that rural people have one-half the number of doctors per 100,000 people, and one-third the dentists, as compared to urban, and also, that 29,000 rural communities are desperately in need of improved water and sewer systems.

Every day newspapers and magazines carry stories of desperate, and often rural, communities, in search of a seldom-to-be-found general practitioner. The decreasing number of "country doctors" leaves many rural people in a very vulnerable position.

PROBLEMS OF RURAL STUDENTS

Having explored the background of the rural student, including the type of parents he probably has, we shall now take a look at the student himself. Hopefully, the preceding section on the characteristics of rural people will provide some sort of basis in understanding the problems the student faces and may bring to the counselor. A "sharp perception and true understanding of the nature of these disadvantaged and the needs arising from them have become of the most vital necessity to our counseling programs, and undoubtedly to all counseling of youth" (Amos and Grambs, 1968, p. 25). In this way, the counselor will be able to assist the student in those areas that need strengthening.

First of all, what type of social status can rural youth claim? Thurston, Feldhusen, and Benning conducted a study of Wisconsin rural youth and discovered the effect that rurality has on the student's social status. They concluded that parents with low occupational and educational levels were more likely to have children with excessively aggressive behavior. Because the parents work at non-skilled and low-paying jobs, they become bored and tired, and these traits seemed to exacerbate any existing personality problems in the home, therfore directly influencing the home atmosphere. Living in rural areas with low income seemed to be especially conducive to the development of "disadvantaged youth". They also reported the following:

> Neighborhood and community culture impinges on the child in a myriad of ways. In the neighborhood, the youngster continues to learn which behaviors are acceptable, and which are unacceptable. In lower class culture, school and education are often viewed as wasteful and inimical to the "important" business of life. The acceptable behavior in these circumstances is to demonstrate antagonism toward teachers and the education they represent. (Thurston, Feldhusen, and Benning, 1964, p.179)

Also, Jenkins reported:

> The limited range of contacts available had effects. the child's opportunity for learning is likely to be more restricted than either the advantaged rural youth or the urban youth. The rebellious rural youth can't melt into the "crowd" available to the urban youth. In the continuity of contacts characteristic of his life, the verbal assurance of the rural youth becomes less important and his performance becomes more important. (Jenkins, 1963, p. 10)

Concerning social status of rural youth then, one would assume that from the above quotes, they are antagonistic, problem children. There are, however, other studies which make just the opposite conclusion, so it is a good idea to clarify this study further. Remember that these students were the lower income students in the rural areas, and not all the rural students.

In a study done in Illinois, McMillion (1966) found that rural disadvantaged youth, by placing certain values on words such as cooperation and leadership, seemed to display that they are not all hostile and rebellious. This study does not necessarily disqualify the ones above; it does seem to show that even in one specific sector of society there are many variables, and one whould not be too hasty to jump to conclusions, or to make generalizations from only one or two studies.

It would be impossible to classify rural students' attitudes as either all good or all bad. In my experience with rural youth, I found the whole gamut of attitudes, and it would be impossible for me to say that there was any correlation between attitudes and degree of disadvantagement in that particular area. The one attitude which I did feel to prevail in the rural atmosphere was that of unconcern about education. Edington (1970) reported that these students seemed to have an impoverished confidence in education, in its value and its importance to their solving their problems. The reader should be able to discern how such an attitude could be a direct result of these students' background.

Edington also mentions other attitudes which are common to rural youth, such as their low self-esteem, and their feeling of helplessness in facing what must seem to be impossible environmental handicaps Attitudes are very important in relation to accomplishments and aspirations. Coleman (1966) found that if students felt that they could control or influence their environment, they did relatively better on achievement test scores, so in this case, there is a direct correlation between an attitude and achievement.

If a counselor is aware of this situation, it may be something that he can develop in cooperation with the students. There are many means of improving attitudes and bettering self-concepts, some of which are mentioned later in the paper. This is obviously an area which is of great significance for the rural disadvantaged student.

Another factor related to rural youth is the type of aspirations they have. If amount of published literature has any correlation to the extent of the problem, then it is probably the most serious, because it seems as if there is an infinite amount of research in this area.

Haller, Buchinal, and Taves (1963) stated that the college and

occupational aspirations of rural youth were lower than those of urban youth, that they had more trouble in getting a permenent job, and their jobs were not as skilled or highly paid as those of urban youth. Such a statement may be quite surprising to most people, but it is only another example of the disadvantagement that rural youth must face. In order to elaborate on this further, it will be necessary to break the topic into the categories of educational aspirations and vocational aspirations, remembering that the two are closely related, but not inseparable.

First, how do rural youth differ according to their educational aspirations? Middletown andGrigg (1959) found that there were significant rural-ruban differences in educational aspirations. For example, in 1960, there were one-half the proportion of rural youth as urban youth enrolled in college (Freeman, 1968, p. 105). These findings tend to show that fewer rural students go to college, and of those who do go, more drop out. The reasons for this are compound.

One reason is the educational achievement of these students. Rural students are "less academically oriented, somewhat less able, and considerably less convinced of the value of higher education" (Lee, 1963, p. 160) than urban students. According to Helen Johnson (1967), poor educational achievement is a characteristic of all groups of disadvantaged rural students. Those students who had fallen behind educationally at least one year were 19 percent of the rural youth, and only 12 percent of the urban youth. Rural youth who dropped out of school before graduating in 1960 numbered 2.3 million, and 8.7 percent of these had less than five years of education (Freeman, 1968, p. 104). Taylor and Jones (1963) stated that the fathers of dropouts would more likely be farm laborers than owners, and the parents of dropouts have low educational achievement records, and so the educational values of the parents are transmitted to the youth in the same proportion as the edudational achievement levels of the parents.

Edington (1970) found that poverty is highly associated with low level educational progress. It is apparent throughout this study that problems are all interrelated and overlapping. Obviously, those students who are lagging in achievement in school are not going to be too motivated to continue their education.

Another reason for lower aspirations isthe parent. Enough has been said about the family background, that the reader should be able to relate those statements to the following quote:

> Values of formal education held by the parents of youth are important factors in the motivation of youth to aspire to higher levels of formal education. Where these values are lacking as in low income families, the youth involved do not perceive education as a dominant value in American culture, and therfore, are not motivated to attain it. (Taylor and Jones 1963, p. 4)

In addition to the above points, the following list will provide some more factors which are highly related to aspirations:

1. Intellectual ability--rural rank below urban

2. Past academic performance.
3. Motivation to succeed in tasks requiring persistance and high level performance.
4. Attitudes and values about mobility, security and independence.
5. Educational climate in the home.
6. The extent to which parents stress high level achievement and goals.
7. Family socio-economic status.
8. The school itself
9. The standards and aspirations of one's peers. (Sewell and Haller, from Lee, 1963, p. 155)

Most of these statements, except for the last two, which will be discussed later, have already been discussed, some within the context of the family background, and these are therefore significant, since they are factors which do differ in the rural environment.

This review of the literature, I believe, includes most of the reasons for the lower level aspirations among rural youth. In addition, I would like to add a final reason to this list, one which I feel, from experience, is prevalent among these youth, and that is the common belief that education is not as important for a boy who plans to farm, even though the chances of his actually farming are few. Because of this, these students drop out, get lower grades, and show less knowledge of the non-farm world of work, and less often plan on college (Haller, Lee, and Taves, 1963, p. 15). Since he will not always be able to enter farming, he will be unable to compete for jobs,and will take those jobs which are less desirable. It is important to stress that the nature of farming is changing. It requires math and science, and a high degree of literacy. In other words, farmers, to be successful, do need education.

Since the educational aspirations and achievement of these youth seem to conform to their heritage, the main problem seems to be that of communicating to these students the value of formal education. Here is where an "aware"counselor with the help of concerned parents and teachers can contribute. "Until rural youth perceive and accept the value for higher education in general, they won't be motivated to pursue it as an important life goal" (Taylor and Jones, 1963, p. 7).

Having discussed educational aspirations, the next question to be answered is what problems are encountered by rural youth concerning their vocational aspirations? This area is not much less dismal than that of education. According to Ackerson (1967) one-tenth of the rural young people would be able to remain successfully in farming; the other nine-tenths were not prepared to find other types of employment. "Ninety percent of rural youth must find jobs other than farming. Sixty percent do not plan on college" (Lindstrom, 1965, p. 39). What will happen to those students who do not go into farming or on to college? How will they be able to find jobs? Taylor and Jones (1963) stated that the range of occupational types was very limited in the rural environment, and there were few, if any, white collar jobs. In addition to this, they were concerned that these youth may not develop the attitudes, desire, or motivation which are necessary for success in such a job.

Taylor and Jones (1963) continue and say that part of the problem lies in the fact that students' peer experiences are homogeneous, and this causes the student to have few experiences with new and different values and traditions. So, their behavior shows great conformity to the cultural values of their rural heritage, and it is this conformity which is reflected in the aspirations, both educational and vocational, of these youth.

In addition to this, Granville found that those disadvantaged students who live in a city have more exposure to occupational offerings than non-city lower middle class students. This tends to reinforce the theory that ignorance about the many higher vocational offerings tends to severely limit the vocational aspirations of the student.

Another aspect of vocational aspirations, which is part of the cause, but if properly controlled, could be changed into a solution of the problem, is the amount of information given to these students regarding opportunities. Both Lindstrom (1965) and Severinsen (1967) felt that the needs of these students are not met. They receive inadequate occupational information, and they do not get as much help in their future occupational planning as those who are college prone. Instead of the school having an important influence on students' job choices, it is the family and peer group that has the most control.

This seems to be a problem that could be lessened with proper counseling and guidance of students, which would include the dissemination of literature on many available opportunities, not only in the work world, but also in the area of further education, including both vocational and technical schools, and college. The counselor should be aware of the inadequate guidance and negative forces which are affecting these rural students, and which make his job a vital factor in their lives.

Having explored the areas of social status, attitudes, and vocational and educational aspirations of rural students, I shall next attempt to answer the question, "What type of cultural milieu is associated with the rural student, and how is he affected by it?" Again, this aspect of his life is closely related to all the others.

Jenkins (1963) states the following:

> As a result of income and other factors, many rural children had extremely limited and impoverished social contacts, limiting learning opportunities, resulting in an increased incidence in cultural and mental retardation in the poorer rural areas.

Edington (1970) elaborates on this idea of cultural retardation in trying to explain how it affects rural children:

> They tend to be limited in the breadth of their cultural experiences and therefore find it difficult to adapt to the educational environment which tends to follow mores and values drawn from the dominant culture and broader frames of cultural reference....Isolation is of special concern because it is perhaps the one characteristic most peculiar to the noncorporate farm child. It

> helps to confine his cultural experience to his own group, and makes it more difficult for school to capitalize on characteristics which could be helpful to the student in a setting with richer and more varied educational resources.

Here again one can notice how the many problems are intertwined, being in this case those of isolation, cultural experiences, and education. It is difficult to separate them.

The effects discussed concerning rural culture have related to the past. Ackerson (1967), in the following statement, gives us some idea of how this will affect youth in the future:

> Youth of rural America are faced with a serious paradox. It's a paradox of opportunity and frustration. They were nurtured in the traditions of a rural environment, and they have known the values of individuality and unrestrained enterprise.... They are entering a future where rural and urban are becoming one and the same...the social change in rural America that many youth have not been prepared for, which causes much of the frustration.

It is ironic that the culture, which should be an enlightenment for one's development is, in the case of the rural child, a source of hindrances. It decreases the potential for educational growth, andit prepares them for a future which no longer exists. It is a source of frustration rather than opportunity. "Rural-urban differences, while diminishing, are still crucial" (Schnore, 1966).

Lastly, in discussing those problems encountered by rural students, I would like to mention the rural education process, including the curriculum, the small school, the rural teachers. This is the system within which the counselor must effectively work.

Edington (1970) felt that the curricula is not always adequate or relevant to the needs of the students, and it whould be better related to the students' lives in terms of the financial and occupational realities. Jenkins (1963) thought that rural schooling is much too restricted to the academic, and that vocational programs should be offered to enable students to break into society with usable skills. Despite the fact that fewer and fewer students remain in farming, most vocational training in rural schools exists only in agriculture.

People should realize that rural students who come from disadvantaged backgrounds are easily misused vocationally. I often think of the racist statement such as, "Mexican-Americans work well with their hands, so we should give them more technical training, and fewer formal studies." I fear that we are trying to do the same thing to the rural student. It is important that the capabilities of the person be considered. In other words, if programs are to be added to the school's curriculum, why do they have to be in just the technical-vocational area? We must be certain that we are not pushing rural students into these professions when they may be capable of much more.

Another problem common to rural areas is the large number of small schools. Eighty-four percent of the country's school districts have

fewer than 1200 pupils, and of the rural districts, the average number of pupils enrolled per school was 105 in elementary, and 177 in secondary school (Noble and Dawson, 1961, p. 137).

Most studies agreed that the small rural schools are not adequately staffed or equipped, and programs are limited. Sybouts in 1970 found that the graduates from such small schools experience less success in college than do graduates from larger schools. Charles, in his 1968 study of rural students gave the following disadvantages of small schools: too isolated, lack of equipment, the highly provincial community, incapable of understanding professionalism.

In examining the teachers in rural schools, Kraft and Kraft (1968) found that most of the rural students in their study liked their teachers and the way that they taught. Gulo (1968) also found that these students felt very positively toward their teachers. Lindstrom (1967) felt that those students who were college prone were more influenced by their teachers, while those who were non-college failed to establish rapport with their teachers. Generally speaking, one may infer from these studies that rural students get along with their teachers, despite the fact that they are probably not as good as urban teachers.

On the secondary level, urban teachers exceeded the rural by 6.3 years of experience. Urban teachers remain longer in the same school system than rural teachers, and one of the reasons for this may be that the average annual salary in 1954 for rural teachers was about 75 percent that of the urban teacher (Noble and Dawson, 1961, p, 142). Freeman (1968) stated that the low salaries do not help to attract and hold better teachers. He added that the percentage of rural teachers not properly certified is about twice as high as that of urban teachers, and counseling in these schools is limited in these schools and frequently completely lacking.

COUNSELING RURAL STUDENTS

It has been shown that rural youth do have special needs and problems. It would follow from this that the counselor of such students should probably have some unique means of handling these problems. Although there are many skills that are essential for all good counselors, such as the ability to relate to other staff members, deal with the red tape of the school bureaucracy, being able to establish priorities, while remaining flexible enough to change them, there are still additional requirements which are especially valuble in dealing with the rural disadvantaged. A review of the literature in this area revealed three major areas of special interest to the counselor: (1) special tools and skills that will help these students, (2) the help of numerous agencies, and (3) the ability to approach each individual as one human being to another.

In discussing special tools and skills, it is interesting to note that traditional counseling does not seem to be sufficient for these students (Thoreson, 1969; Stewart and Moulton, 1966). Perhaps this is because these students are not the verbal, self-insightful, and motivated

person pre-supposed by traditional counseling. It is therefore up to the counselor to find those means which are most effective.

Several studies (Meyer and Strowig, 1970 ; Department of Agriculture, 1969 ; Stewart and Moulton, 1966) have indicated the success of using behavioral modification techniques with these students, especially when working to aid them in making wise decisions and encouraging the use of information-seeking behavior, which are, needless to say, important assets for disadvantaged students. The wise counselor should be able to utiliqe the same type of counseling, and perhaps even incorporate it into a group situation, in working with the special problems of rural youth, such as their attitudes, or aspirations, if these students feel that they would like to change.

Special skills are also necessary in working with potential dropouts (mentioned on page 7). Understanding the rural background provides some explanation for the high incidence, so the counselor must learn how to cope with this situation, by coordinating staff members' efforts and seeking close parental support. Moore (1963) proposed that the counselor can study the reasons for dropping out, identify systematically the potential dropout, be alert to proneness in failing students, coordinate staff efforts, and also consider using school-work experience programs, additional counseling, summer contacts, and extra-curricular activities.

In this area also, group counseling, combined with other methods, has been found to be very effective. (Gowan and Demos, 1966, p. 338). The importance of counseling with teachers to increase their understanding of students, and to provide special skills for appropriately meeting these students' needs seems to be apparent, but is easily overlooked

The counselor also needs special skills in dealing with the important vocational problems of these students. Gordon (1969) gives several suggestions such as tying the counseling directly to the youth's concrete experiences, breaking long-term goals into achievable short-term goals, and avoiding too elaborate and extended vocational planning by making it homogeneous with the training and placement available, and with the interests and abilities of the student. He also found a favorable response to heterogeneous group support and interaction.

Gysbers (Brobst, 1970) approaches the problem from a different angle, although he concedes the same need for a realistic vocational identity, his major focus is with the student's feelings. The students should try to assess the impact of their career exploration activities on their lives, and how these experiences are affecting them and relating to them. Neither approach should be ignored.

Once the student has made a decision, the counselor has a need to "inform him about his mobility prior to any decisions about moving, and he should also provide greater access to nationwide labor market information, especially in those cities to which the youth migrate" (Aller, 1967). Dowler (1967) also discusses the possibility of opportunities at home in areas of agribusiness, about which the student should be informed, since this possibility receives little recognition.

Having discussed some of the areas in which special skills are valuble should make one aware of the inability of the counselor to solve

all of these problems on an immediate basis. One should be more open therefore, to the need for help from numerous agencies. The counselor should be cognizant of those outside sources of help which are available especially for rural students, even though in some causes such services are acarce, and sometimes even absent. Brown (1967), Brobst (1970), and Mueller (1967) all stress the great need for special services and programs for rural youth. Mueller, however, feels that outside programs are failing due to the fact that youth are making an exodus to urban areas. I do not see this as a responsibility of agencies, and therefore can not consider it their failure. The fact remains that youth are going to migrate regardless of any program, and responsibilities should lie in helping these youth make adequate adjustments to their new lives. Brobst sees the transition as a change of psychological pace, where life will be more impersonal, interaction competitive, thinking more self-centered, and lonesomeness will appear. He feels that adequate development of educational and vocational skills will provide a smoother adjustment.

Agencies can help in this inevitable transition, and this is one of the functions of the State Manpower Councils and Neighborhood Youth Corps under the Manpower and Development Training Act (Aller, 1967). In addition to this, these programs also offer information about employment opportunities and outlooks, job placement services, vocational counseling, evaluation of student aptiudes, as well as economic assistance

Similar opportunities are offered by the State Employment Office (Department of Agriculture, 1963), the Job Corps (Loughary, 1965), and Youth Opportunity Centers (Gross, 1969), although the Youth Opportunity Centers are more concerned with counseling, and the Job Corps exists only for those rural youth who are willing to join. For those who do join, counseling and guidance services which are available are aimed to promote self-understanding, environmental information, social adjustment skills, personal decision-making, planning, and problem-solving assistance, as well as facilitating individual development by contributing to other aspects of the program. The counselor of rural youth should be aware of these opportunities, as well as those which may be unique to his locale.

Another agency which is of great benefit indirectly to the student is the NDEA, which has been a strong motivating force for improving high school guidance. It has promoted the development of new programs and improved old programs (Warburton, 1964) . It has worked to fill gaps to make these programs more effective. Additional accomplishments of the NDEA program are listed in Appendix B of this paper. Despite the accomplishments, most of the rural counselors "generally agreed that often essential services to students were neglected, and resources available were not utilized fully because inadequate time was allocated for guidance work" (Warburton, 1964, p. 113).

The third very special counselor function needed with these youth is the ability to approach each individual as one human being to another. In other words, the counseling relationship should be one where the student is treated with understanding and concern as a person. Gowan

and Demos (1966, p. 313) in listing the following steps in counseling disadvantaged youth, tend to stress the importance of this human relationship:

1. Give regard and attention to the student's problem.
2. Get the student to talk about his problem.
3. Isolate and specify the fear.
4. Get him to see that others have similar problems.
5. Act as a type of corrective mirror in getting the student to see himself as others do.
6. Get him to accept himself as he is and begin to compensate for it.
7. Find strengths and build on them.
8. Invest confidence and encouragement.

Naturally, these steps are important in all counseling relationships, but they are especially important in dealing with disadvantaged youth. Another study by the New York State Education Department (1966) stated that the counselor should always work towards a positive counseling relationship, and one way of doing this is by accepting the student where he is. This is an accurate reflection of my philosophy, and I applaud the idea.

Another aspect of this approach is presented by Gordon(1969), and I feel that it is very valid and worth reflection. He feels that the counselor should attempt to change the environmental pressures on their clients rather than attempt to make the client responsible for changing himself and his reaction to the outside hostile and disadvantaging forces. This would tend to indicate that the counselor should not try to mold a client, which is logical, but where possible, he should try to alter the environment. In working with rural disadvantaged youth, this might mean special conferences with teachers to increase their understanding of the situation (this was mentioned previously), or effectively handling the administrators, or maybe merely just accepting the student as was mentioned above.

Amos and Grambs (1968) feel that it is important to help to develop potentialities by viewing the youth as a whole human being, and this seems to be very congruent with the sentiments expressed above; however, I tend to disagree with the method they suggest....that of changing direction of life, so the student will be more able to cope with contemporary demands of life and employment. This seems to be opposed to Gordon's stand, but like many decisions the counselor has to make, the method he chooses will depend upon his own personal philosophy.

It is of more importance to realize that although rural students have many of the same problems, they are still individuals. The counselor should never lump them all together and categorize them, lest he may begin to disregard the uniqueness of each person who comes to him.

SPECIAL PROBLEMS OF COUNSELING IN RURAL SCHOOLS

Interestingly enough, it is seldom difficult to find negative information concerning any issue, and rural counseling is not an exception, and in this case it seems to be warranted. Many of the problems appear to stem from the fact that most rural schools are small, as can be noted in the following list of abstacles impeding effective rural guidance (Warburton, 1964, p. 108):

1. The school board, teachers and administrators do not understand the interrelation of guidance and counseling and education.
2. The school board and community officials are unable to command financial support.
3. Parents do not understand the importance of education.
4. Distances and lack of time and money decrease the number of home visitations.
5. Parents do not realize the importance of post high school education or training.
6. It is difficult for students to participate in extra-curricular activities and they therefore have more social problems.
7. Students with financial problems tend to drop out of school so they can "help out at home".
8. There is little adult education to increase an appreciation of the school.
9. The continuous leadership needed to solve these problems is lacking.
10. There is a high turnover, and little of the needed continuity of effort.

Fortunately, some of the financial problems mentioned above are handled by the NDEA (See Appendix B).

Despite the importance of vocational guidance, there are also many problems relating to that area. Brobst (1970) presents the following list, some of which have been mentioned earlier in the paper:

1. Rural areas are less likely to have manpower programs of vocational training available. (The MDTA, NYC, Job Corps, CEP, NABS, etc, are all more urban)
2. They are less likely to have comprehensive programs of vocational education.
3. They are less likely to have opportunities for vocational try-out experiences through work-study programs.
4. There are less differential course offerings.
5. It is harder to see the breadth of existing occupations.
6. Fewer students have access to community colleges, etc.
7. There are few available U.S. Training and Employment Services.

Brobst (1970) also discusses the lack of programs in rural schools, and the following list should support his theory:

1. In rural areas schools are less likely to operate on an organized basis with guidance specialists at each level.
2. The relative number of full-time, fully-prepared school counselors is less in rural areas.

3. The relative degree of professional isolationism is high.
4. The opportunity for a complete program of pupil personnel services is less in rural areas.
5. The opportunity for the counselor to learn about occupations in business and industry is less in rural areas.
6. There is less opportunity to participate in job-placement programs.
7. The chance to acquire information about post high school occupational opportunities is less than in non-rural areas.

The biggest problem that I have noticed in relating to rural counselors is what Brobst mentions secondly in the list. In small rural schools, counselors are hired seemingly only to barely meet the minimum requirements, which do not seem to be adequate. Froehlich (1950) states that large schools can recruit qualified competent personnel because of more money and status. The problem does not seem to be too many students, as is seen in the cities, but not enough skills or motivation to handle the job.

Other problems related to small schools, such as an absence of an understanding of changing times, and a limited number of adults and students to meet challenges, tend to make effective guidance in these areas more difficult. The counselor should be aware of these problems, and then he will be more able to handle them. They may hinder, but certainly do not prevent effective guidance.

In addition to trying to work around and within these problems, the counselor should also work to remedy some of the hindrances, wherever possible, despite the depressing statement made by Bohrson and Gann (1963), "As long as good leaders are flocking to the cities, rural schools may always be inferior".

CONCLUSION

Not all is grim in rural school counseling, and to conclude on a more positive note, there are certain advantages of small rural school counseling. Bohrson and Gann (1963) mention the greater amount of flexibility and the closeness to students and the community environment which the counselor can attain. Few other places offer the counselor the opportunity to know each of his counselees, and their family backgrounds, their brothers and sisters, their teachers, etc. The closeness itself provides a tremendous opportunity for potent counseling.

Froehlich (1950, p. 223) feels that "small schools can have high quality counseling, although limited in scope". The combination of students and teachers knowing each other well, close community ties, young teachers, a relatively stable student population, and an effective faculty group, all help to improve counseling potentiality.

Programs in rural and urban schools are not of the same quality, nor are they of the same type (Froehlich, 1950, p. 201). Due to the greater number of personal contacts between pupils and teachers, there is a lot of teacher-pupil counseling. As the school size increases, services become more organized and formal. This merely tends to echo the feeling that small schools and rural students are unique, and should be dealt with in a unique way.

"As long as we have small schools, we must strive to make them effective in meeting the imperative needs of youth". (Froehlich, 1950, p. 223).

APPENDIX A

. Selected characteristics of the population, by place of residence, United States, 1960

Characteristic	Urban	Rural nonfarm	Rural farm
Total population (000's)	125,284	40,567	13,475
White population (000's)	110,443	36,519	11,876
Nonwhite population (000's)	14,841	4,048	1,598
Percent aged 65 and over	9.1	8.9	9.3
Median age	30.3	26.7	29.6
Average size of family	3.56	3.81	3.96
Children ever born per 1,000 ever-married women 35–39	2,514	3,034	3,469
Percent in same house, 1955 and 1960	47.9	48.7	71.4
Percent unemployed	5.1	6.1	3.0
Percent of females in labor force	37.2	28.7	22.9
Median income of husband-wife families	$6,454	$4,976	$3,316
Percent of employed males:			
In agriculture	1.4	9.0	69.3
White-collar workers	40.2	27.2	7.6
Farmers and farm managers	0.4	3.5	33.0
Farm laborers	0.6	5.1	15.1
Percent five-year-olds enrolled in kindergarten	46.0	23.4	15.8
Percent 7- to 13-year-olds enrolled in school	97.8	97.1	97.2
Percent 19-year-old school dropouts	29.0	42.3	41.6
Percent aged 25–29 with 4 years high school or more	65.8	55.0	51.4
Median years of school completed by persons 25 years old and over	11.1	9.3	8.8
Percent of all housing units with hot and cold piped water	95.0	70.3	63.5
Percent of all occupied housing units:			
With 1.01 or more persons per room	10.2	15.4	14.4
Deteriorated or dilapidated	13.8	25.3	30.3
With home freezer	13.0	26.0	52.7
With telephone	83.1	67.1	64.2
With automobile	76.1	83.7	87.3

Source: Abstracted from "A Summary of Selected Characteristics of the Urban and Rural Populations, by State, 1960," Washington, D.C.: Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, March, 1964 from L.F. Schnore, "The Rural-Urban Variable: Urbanite's Perspective," Rural Sociology, 31 (1966), 131-43.

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APPENDIX B

FINDINGS OUTLINED

The most significant achievements resulting from NDEA Title V-A gleaned from reports of states and local schools, visits to schools, and papers written by seniors for this study are listed below:

1. Federal administrative policies encouraged diversity in use of NDEA reimbursements and adaptation to local needs.
2. A strong motivating force was provided for improved guidance in rural high schools by increased activities of federal and state guidance offices.
3. New guidance programs developed and established programs were improved.
4. New approaches to improving guidance services were stimulated.
5. Community agencies were enabled to participate in the schools' guidance work more frequently when a counselor was available to plan for use of their services, and the counselor sometimes made an important contribution to a community agency.
6. More graduates continued their education or training and received scholarships.
7. Number of dropouts decreased with more attention to the student's problems.
8. Research projects to improve guidance were stimulated.
9. School staff became more sensitive to individual students' needs as the guidance program developed.
10. Concepts of the curriculum broadened with further attempts to meet students' needs.
11. Seriousness of purpose in students was engendered by the guidance program.
12. The morale of counselors was "boosted" by the nationwide guidance effort, improving their work, and helping to establish guidance services as a "respectable" and accepted part of the curriculum.

On the other hand, nearly all state and local guidance workers indicated serious unmet needs. They recommended:

1. Extension of NDEA Title V-A to all elementary grades.
2. More counselors with special training for needs of rural schools and adequate time allocated for guidance responsibilities, especially for counseling non-college-bound students and those with personal problems, and for community work.
3. Expansion of curriculum to complement guidance services, to include a comprehensive vocational education program for students to explore and develop skills.
4. Expansion of services to complement guidance program by providing adequate welfare and health services including psychological and psychiatric.
5. Provision of scholarships to help potential dropouts remain in school.
6. Expansion of employment opportunities and more occupational information for counselors to assist students in locating jobs.
7. More financial assistance to implement the above recommendations.

'Source: Amber Warburton, Stimulating Guidance in Rural Schools (Washington: American Personnel and Guidance Association, 1964) p. 113-14.

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